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Chair: Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Advancement of women (*continued*)
(A/71/38, A/71/209, A/71/219, A/71/223, A/71/306
and A/71/398)

1. **Mr. Tupouniua** (Tonga) said that Tonga attached great importance to national ownership and careful domestication of multilateral treaties. After receiving initial push-back, his Government was working to gather the support of all stakeholders for the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the meantime, it was continuing to align its policies with the Convention.

2. Gender equality was one of the seven national goals of the second Tonga Strategic Development Framework, 2015-2025. For 2016-2017, his Government was focusing on political participation, violence against women and women's economic empowerment. Recently, two women had been elected to local offices never before held by women, and a woman had been elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time since 2005. In addition, efforts were underway to increase women's participation in the Legislative Assembly, initially by setting aside seats for them. With respect to violence against women, steps had been taken to improve the existing legislative framework, and the police had been trained in the most appropriate ways to respond to incidents of gender-related violence.

3. **Ms. Klein** (Madagascar) said that women's rights had long been a priority. Madagascar's National Development Plan 2015-2019 included programmes to strengthen social protections for women and girls, and its national social protection policy focused on them. As part of its efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, it had reworked its national plans and strategies to ensure that women gained equal access to economic resources and basic services. It had also recently amended the Nationality Code to allow children with a Malagasy mother and a foreign father to acquire Malagasy citizenship.

4. Madagascar's Independent National Human Rights Commission was empowered to question the Government on human rights violations. In addition to providing legal and psychological counselling, support

centres for women victims of violence conducted community awareness campaigns. Other campaigns promoted women's equality among male leaders and boys. Madagascar had taken steps to facilitate women's access to microcredit, and it awarded scholarships to girls to increase their likelihood of staying in school. Emergency obstetric care had been improved, and traditional midwives in remote areas were being given medical training. In closing, she thanked the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and all of Madagascar's bilateral and multilateral partners for their assistance in combating early marriage and obstetric fistula.

5. **Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia) said that the issues impeding the advancement of women were complex, plentiful and diverse. Under its Welfare Action Plan 2016-2023, Estonia would tackle gender stereotyping and adopt policies to promote gender equality in the workplace. It welcomed the assistance of non-governmental organizations, which could be instrumental in identifying and prosecuting violations of women's rights.

6. One of the Goal 5 targets was to enhance the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to promote the empowerment of women. Given the urgent need for ICT-skilled workers, it was vital to ensure that women and girls had equal access to the necessary training. Estonia commended the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for raising and pursuing the topic of innovation, for incorporating technology into its own programmes and for supporting initiatives that encouraged women to become technology entrepreneurs. ICT could be used to help raise awareness of gender-based violence and discrimination and to provide online support for victims. Estonia had a comprehensive strategy for preventing violence and for creating better services for victims of violence, both online and offline.

7. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that Eritrean women had asserted their equality in a patriarchal society by joining in the struggle for self-determination. Because of that legacy, the promotion of women's rights and women's participation at all levels had been an important tenet of government policy since independence. Eritrea had taken a bottom-up approach to increasing women's

participation by setting quotas for women judges and administrators at the community level. As a result of priority attention, half of elementary and secondary school students were girls, and women had broader access to vocational and skills training. Women's equal participation in development activities had been critical for the achievement of various Millennium Development Goal benchmarks, and they continued to participate actively in advocating, legislating and implementing national policies, especially those relating to gender matters.

8. Eritrea had presented its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2015. In close collaboration with the National Union of Eritrean Women, an independent grassroots organization, her Government was continuing its efforts to prevent rape and sexual harassment, to discourage underage marriage and to combat violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation. Awareness campaigns and a legal ban had resulted in a reduction in the incidence of female genital mutilation in girls aged 5 and under from 95 per cent in 1995 to 12 per cent.

9. However, the politically motivated sanctions and Ethiopia's illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories continued to hinder all of Eritrea's development activities, including the advancement of women.

10. **Ms. Rahimova** (Azerbaijan) said that Azerbaijan welcomed the commitment to address the vulnerabilities of refugee women and children expressed in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, as well as the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

11. In Azerbaijan, the Criminal Code had been amended to criminalize the trafficking of women and forced and child marriages. The Government was stepping up its efforts to combat trafficking in women and children, and it had also launched a country-wide online database on violence against women. Women's representation in the National Assembly and municipal government was increasing steadily. State programmes included measures aimed at enhancing women's access to resources and opportunities, and a new public entity had recently been established to boost family businesses.

12. Azerbaijan had ratified many International Labour Organization treaties, including the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, and the Convention concerning the revision of the Maternity Protection Convention. It worked closely with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which had recognized its programmes for supporting internally displaced persons, most of whom were women and girls; the high literacy rates among women and the secondary school enrolment rate for girls.

13. **Ms. Stanesco** (Romania) said that, with respect to women's empowerment, Romania was focusing its efforts on ensuring that women had equal access to employment by addressing challenges such as reintegrating mothers into the workforce, providing child care and other supportive infrastructure and encouraging increased sharing of family responsibilities. Romania was fully committed to fighting all forms of violence against women and girls. As part of its commitment to the UN-Women HeForShe movement, it was creating an integrated system to track, report and prevent domestic violence. Following ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence earlier that year, her Government was working to transpose its provisions into domestic law and had approved the establishment of a committee on preventing and combating violence against women.

14. **Mr. Zamora Rivas** (El Salvador) said that gender equality and women's empowerment were essential for development, peace and democracy. El Salvador's 2014-2019 development plan provided for gradually reducing gender inequality and meeting women's specific interests and needs. In particular, El Salvador was committed to addressing the needs of women facing multiple forms of discrimination, including older, indigenous, disabled or refugee women and women domestic workers. It was particularly concerned about the need to protect women migrant workers. Various programmes and projects implemented since 2009 had given rural women access to more jobs, new sources of income and credit, as well as to tangible and intangible assets. However, they were far from achieving equality with men. In general, despite significant positive changes, El Salvador still faced major challenges for women's

equality and empowerment; the highest priorities were violence against women and inadequate access to justice.

15. **Mr. Tchalaré** (Togo) said that in Togo free or reduced-fee education and parity measures had improved the statistics for girls in academic and vocational education, and literacy classes were being offered to more women each year. In accordance with the recommendations arising from its sixth and seventh reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, his Government had launched a series of campaigns to increase awareness of women's rights, reduce gender disparities and change attitudes and behaviour and had amended the Personal and Family Code to bring it into line with the Convention. Togo's growth and employment strategy had already improved the income and living conditions of Togolese women, and its programme to make financial services accessible to the very poor had helped more than 300,000 women. The volunteer programme for young Togolese had provided work and training for thousands of young women. Women held 15 per cent of the seats and three leadership posts in the National Assembly.

16. **Ms. Larrabee** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that global efforts to care for women and girls affected by migration, conflicts, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies needed to be strengthened. States had a critical opportunity to incorporate a strong gender perspective in the two global compacts to be negotiated on migration and refugees. The agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women had called on States and other actors to address sexual and gender-based violence as an integral and prioritized part of every humanitarian response. In turn, the thirty-second International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent had adopted a resolution setting forth a number of practical actions, including encouraging IFRC to continue its research on sexual and gender-based violence in disasters and other emergencies and calling on States to strengthen their domestic legal frameworks and assess their domestic procedures, policies and plans to ensure adequate attention to such violence.

17. IFRC welcomed the emphasis on humanitarian settings in the 2030 Agenda. The incidence of

preventable maternal and under-5 deaths in such settings was unacceptably high. Experience within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement showed that, when empowered and provided with essential life-saving commodities, information and training, affected communities could significantly reduce mortality risks.

18. **Mr. Carvalho Pinheiro** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said ILO had worked actively to promote women's empowerment and end violence against women by adopting a number of legally binding conventions and developing codes of conduct, management tools and guidelines. It was looking to adopt a new international standard on violence in the workplace, which harmed not only workers but also families, communities and the economy. Together with several United Nations agencies and special procedures mandate holders, it had launched SDG Alliance 8.7 to strengthen coordination among the many actors involved in combating forced labour, human trafficking, modern slavery and child labour. The joint World Bank-ILO Universal Social Protection Initiative had been formed to help to build comprehensive social protection systems that would promote women's empowerment. The ILO Domestic Workers Convention provided legal protection for domestic workers, who were predominantly women. Lastly, in the lead-up to its 100th anniversary in 2019, it had launched the Women at Work Centenary Initiative for the purpose of renewing its commitment to women's equality and identifying areas of future action.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

19. **Mr. Mizumoto** (Japan) said that, at the previous meeting, the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had made slanderous assertions about Japan that were based on an erroneous understanding of the facts.

20. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation), responding to a statement by the representative of Ukraine, said that Crimea's reunification with the Russian Federation had taken place in full accordance with international law. Moreover, by raising the subject in an inappropriate context, the representative had once again demonstrated that any topic could be used for strictly political purposes regardless of the issue at hand. Since the beginning of the so-called anti-terrorist

operation in South-East Ukraine, just over a million Ukrainians had fled to the Russian Federation, including Crimea. He would like to know what methodology had been used to calculate the number of "internally displaced persons" cited by the Ukrainian representative.

21. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine), speaking in Russian for the benefit of the Russian delegation, said that it was pointless to try to convince the Committee that the Russian Federation had nothing to do with the aggression against Ukraine. The General Assembly had already condemned its annexation of Crimea, and the Russian representative herself was fully aware of her Government's involvement. The Russian Federation was continuing to support and fund the conflict in his country. If it were not still sending arms, munitions and militants into Ukraine, there would be no armed conflict there and thus no counterterrorism operation. Reminding the Committee of the results of the recent investigation into the downing of the Malaysia Airlines airplane over Ukraine, he asked the Russian representative to explain how the Russian missile system had ended up in Ukrainian territory.

22. Ukraine was doing its utmost to provide for the people internally displaced by Russian actions, who had at one point totalled a million. His delegation once again called on the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops from Ukraine and stop fuelling the conflict.

23. **Mr. Ri Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Japanese representative's statement was utter nonsense. Japan should admit and apologize for its past crimes against humanity, namely, conscripting more than 8 million Koreans, massacring 1 billion others and forcing 200,000 Korean women into sexual slavery. It should also apologize for another shameful violation of human rights: prohibiting of members of the Korean resistance living in Japan from travelling to their homeland to be reunited with their families.

24. **Mr. Mizumoto** (Japan) said that his Government's position was as previously stated, and he would refrain from entering into a detailed rebuttal. Since the Second World War, Japan had consistently endeavoured to build a free and democratic State based on respect for human rights and the rule of law and had supported peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. It would remain a peace-loving nation and

would continue to contribute to peace and prosperity around the world.

25. **Mr. Ri Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that Japan would be well advised to acknowledge State responsibility for past crimes rather than trying to cover them up.

26. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) urged the Ukrainian delegation to stop politicizing the discussion of the advancement of women. Also, the Ukrainian representative could respond in English, which she understood equally well.

27. **Mr. Yaremenko** (Ukraine), responding in English, said that his delegation was not politicizing the item under discussion. He had only wished to remind one delegation of General Assembly resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The Member States had agreed to abide by the principles of the Charter and should keep their commitments.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.